

THE FAMILY EVALUATION

TAKING A FRESH LOOK AT HOW OUR GOD CONCEPT IS FORMED

Compiled by Dick Schreder

Forgiveness is the key that will set us free to be whole and receive the Father's love. This, in turn, will set us free to love others and build healthy, mature relationships. The goal of this evaluation is to point out areas of unforgiveness we have toward our parents so that forgiveness can be extended.

WHAT IS THE "GOD CONCEPT"?

A person's "God Concept" is that combination of images, feelings, and thoughts that forms our understanding of who God is. It is the lens through which one sees God and, fortunately or unfortunately, the lens through which one believes God sees him or her.

A person's "God Concept" remains blurred and distorted to some extent regardless of how spiritually mature they may become because it is the product of the imperfect understanding of our own mental limitations. However, the nature of the "God Concept" acquired in childhood tends to attract a person to God or repel them from God, and it affects the comfort and productivity of the person's life.

WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT?

No one interacts with God as he really is. Each of us interacts with God through the concept we have of Him. God desires to progressively reveal to us who He really is! This worksheet will help point out areas from our family of origin that affect our view of who God is.

Other than one's self-concept, no other set of ideas exerts such a powerful influence on the believer's life as his/her God Concept. The total life experience is colored by the way one views God *and the way one believes God views him/her*. In one's spiritual life, it is the difference between living a life of duty or discovery. Do you regard God as the angry judge who punishes or a loving Father who rewards obedience? In one's emotional life it is the difference between living in fear or living in love. In one's social life it is the difference between feeling threatened or secure with other people. In one's physical life it is the difference between living under the tyranny of stress or experiencing the peace of God; Jesus is the prince of peace.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR OWN "GOD CONCEPT"

Answer the following questions honestly. Ask the Holy Spirit to stir your memory. The goal of this exercise is not to be critical of our parents but to discover more about whom we perceive God to be. All hurts and disappointments from the past must be squarely faced. Once the hurts are honestly faced, forgiveness can be extended and Father's grace is released to change and heal our hearts.

If you have stepparents, fill out a separate evaluation sheet for each parent. For example, if you have a step father, fill out one evaluation for your natural father answering as many questions as you can, then complete a second evaluation for your step father for the time you lived with him.

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR FATHER:

1. List 5 positive qualities of your father:

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.
- E.

2. List 5 negative qualities of your father.

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.
- E.

3. Circle all of the following words describe the way that you view your father?

COMPASSIONATE	DIFFICULT TO PLEASE	SUPPORTIVE
INDIFFERENT	THREATENING	CONDEMNING
ABSENT	ANGRY	STRONG
UNDERSTANDING	PUNISHING	TOO BUSY
CONTROLLING	KIND-HEARTED	DISTANT
HARSH	THOUGHTFUL	GENTLE

4. How did your father communicate his love to you?

Did you feel his love emotionally?

What emotions did your father express openly? How did he express them?

5. How did he love your mother?

Did you feel secure in your parents' love for each other?

6. Did you feel that your father understood you?

Describe how you and your father communicated.

7. How did he discipline you?

Was his discipline fair or unfair?

Did he discipline out of love or out of anger?

Did he have favorites in the family? Who were they?

8. How was he a faithful material provider?

How was he faithful to his words and promises?

9. Was he faithful to your mother?

10. What was the most pleasant experience you had with your father?

What was the most unpleasant experience you had with your father?

List any painful memories that you have about your father.

Was he addicted to any drugs or alcohol?

If so, what are your feelings about that?

11. How did you feel that you had to earn your father's acceptance and approval?

Did your father keep free of bitterness and resentment?

12. Was your father sexually pure towards you? If no, write a paragraph describing how you feel about that.

Did your father ever physically abuse you?

13. Did he take an interest in the things in which you were involved in as a child?

Did you have fun with your dad while you were growing up?

14. Did he willing and patiently answer your questions?

Did he seek to control or manipulate anyone in the family? How?

15. What is/was your father's goal in life?

In what ways are you like your father?

In what ways are you different from your father?

16. How did you feel about your father as a child through age 10?

From age 11-18?

From age 18-30?

At the present time?

17. Do you hate or resent him for anything?

Have you forgiven him of all his faults and failures?

Do you blame him for the way you are?

CONSIDER YOUR MOTHER

1 Corinthians 11:3 states, "Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God." God has established a divine order for the family, so that even after the tragic results of the fall of man, all of us would have a healthy pattern in the family to learn about God. Satan's desire is to destroy the family by crippling the children's concept of who God is through distorted family relationships, thus wounding the child's ability to see God as a loving heavenly Father. Dysfunctional parental relationships hinder the child from knowing how proper relationships work. Our purpose in this study is to understand our past, forgive the wrongs done to us by our mother, and ask the Holy Spirit to bring healing according to Luke 4:18.

A child learns the fatherhood of God from their earthly father. The proper response to God is learned from the way the mother responds to her husband.

The relationship between Christ and the Church is a love relationship. The way the wife responds to her husband sets the pattern for the children as to how we (THE BRIDE) should respond to Jesus (THE HUSBAND). The quality of relationship a husband and wife have sets the tone of the atmosphere of the home where the children are raised, which deeply influences their self-esteem. (see Ephesians 5:22-33)

THERE IS NO ONE LIKE MOM!

Understanding mothering has much more to do with understanding God, people, and how we are to relate to others than it has to do with gender. Most people want a comfortable, mutually satisfying friendship with that very significant person in our life--our mother. But the reality generally falls short of the ideal. You may experience "mother trouble" in several areas. Check the statements that apply to your relationship with your mother. You may feel:

unable to communicate with her
her lack of respect of your choices and values
her refusal to accept your own family and friends
a lack of freedom to have a separate life without losing her love
disconnected from and misunderstood by her
difficulty in saying "no" and confronting her
you have to hide your real self and be perfect
responsible to make her think that she is perfect
guilt when you don't take care of her as she wants you to
disillusionment and conflict over her interactions with your spouse
guilt over not living up to her expectations and wishes
sorrow that she can't seem to comprehend your pain
act childlike in her presence
frustration over her seeming self-absorption
like cringing when she treats your children in familiar hurtful ways
discouraged that this list is so long

How we were mothered drastically impacts all areas of your life. Not only do we learn our patterns of intimacy, relating, and separateness from mother, but we also learn ideals, grief and loss, and many of the other components that make up our "emotional IQ" -- that part of us that guarantees whether or not we will be successful at love, work, and relationships. In short, the following two realities largely determine our emotional development:

1. How we were mothered
2. How we have responded to that mothering

It is mother who gives birth and life to the infant. It is in her arms that we learn safety and trust, assuring that we are not alone in the world. Indeed, for most of us, mothering has something to do with a caring connection.

The Psalmist said it this way: "Yet you brought me out of the womb; you made me trust in you even at my mother's breast." (Psalms 22:9) For as long as humankind has been on the earth, we have associated mothering with trust and nurture. Yet many have not received nurture and trust from their mothers. Instead of connecting safely to their mothers, they have found an ongoing emptiness and void in their lives.

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR MOTHER:

1. List 5 positive qualities of your mother.
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.
 - D.
 - E.

2. List 5 negative qualities of your mother.
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.
 - D.
 - E.

- 3. How did your mother show her love and respect for your father?**
- 4. Did she have favorites in the family?**
How did that make you feel?
- 5. How did her words to you make you feel?**
- 6. Describe the kind of communication your mother and father had.**
In what areas could they have improved in?
What emotions did your mother express openly? How did she express them?
- 7. Did your parents outwardly show love and affection to each other?**
- 8. Were/are you able to be open and honest with your mother and talk freely with her?**
Did you feel that she understood you?
- 9. Did she seek to control or manipulate anyone in the family?**
- 10. Did your mother worry?**
- 11. Did your mother keep free of bitterness and resentment?**
- 12. Describe the atmosphere of your home. Was it a safe place?**
- 13. Was your mother faithful to your father?**
- 14. Was your mother sexually pure towards you?**
Did your mother ever physically abuse you?
- 15. What was the most pleasant experience you had with your mother?**
What was the most unpleasant experience you had with your mother?

List any painful memories that you have about your mother.

Was she addicted to drugs or alcohol?

16. What is/was your mother's goal in life?

In what ways are you like your mother?

In what ways are you different from your mother?

17. How did you feel about your mother as a child through age 10?

From age 11-18?

From age 18-30?

At the present time?

18. Have you forgiven her for all her faults, shortcomings and failures?

Do you hate or resent her for anything?

Do you blame her for the way you are?

PRACTICAL STEPS TOWARD HEALING:

Exodus 20:12 tells us,

"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged
in the land which the Lord your God gives you."

Honoring your parents implies three things:

- 1. BEING GRATEFUL FOR THEM AND ACCEPTING THEM FOR WHO THEY ARE.**
(Thanks, Father, for my parents!)
- 2. FORGIVING THEM FOR ALL THEIR FAULTS, HURTS, AND FAILURES.**
(I completely forgive you, dad and mom.)

3. COMMUNICATING YOUR LOVE AND ACCEPTANCE TO THEM ON AN ONGOING BASIS. (Fulfilled by regularly writing letters, making phone calls, and doing loving things for them.)

Your concept of your earthly father deeply molds your concept of the heavenly Father. Your response to your mother sets the pattern for relationships in your life. We are going to ask Jesus to heal all the wrong ideas we have about our Heavenly Father and replace it with a loving revelation of Himself.

PRACTICAL STEPS:

1. Forgive your father and mother for every hurt, disappointment, and failure. Remember that forgiveness is a choice, not a feeling.
2. Thank God for the father and mother He gave you.
3. Accept your parents for who they are; cease trying to change them or expecting them to love you in ways they are not able to.
4. In prayer, ask Jesus to come and heal the hurts of the past according to **Luke 4:18**. Jesus will come and fill you with a revelation of the Father's love.
5. Go through the above questions again and look for all the ways that our Heavenly Father is indeed a PERFECT FATHER and a PERFECT MOTHER!

FOR FURTHER THOUGHT:

FOR MEN: - Look over the list of negative qualities in Question #2 for your father. You will tend to have those same tendencies in your life. Ask Jesus to help you be aware of them and work on changing them.

How do you think your mother influences your choice of a girlfriend or a spouse?

FOR WOMEN: - Look over the list of negative qualities in question #2 for your mother. You will tend to have those same qualities in your life. Ask Jesus to help you be aware of them and allow Jesus to change them.

How do you think your father influences your choice of a boyfriend or spouse?

Exodus 34:6-7 reveals to us the awesome truth that our own sin will influence our children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren down to the fourth generation. By God's grace and power, we can break the destructive cycle of sin and pass on a wholesome inheritance to our progeny.